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The Manchester Journal.

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BY D. K. SIMONDS,

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## STAGE DRIVER'S STORY.

Fourteen years ago I drove from Dan-

bury to Littleton, a distance of forty-two

miles, and as I had to wait the arrival

of two or three coaches, and I did not

start until after dinner, I very often had

a good distance to drive after dark. It

was in the dead of winter, and the season

had been a rough one. A great deal of

snow had fallen, and the drifts were

plenty and deep. The mail that I carried

was not due in Littleton by contract un-

til one o'clock in the morning. But the

winter postmaster was obliged to wait

up a little later than that hour for me.

One day in January, when I drove up

with my mail at Danbury, the postmaster

called me into the office.

Pete, said he, with an important serious

look, there's some pretty heavy money

packages in that bag, and he pointed to it

as he spoke. He said the money was

from Boston to some land agents near the

Canada line. Then he asked me if I had

any passengers who were going through

to Littleton? I told him I did not know

that suppose I have not, says I.

Why, said he, the agent of the lower

road came in to-day, and he said that

there were two suspicious characters on

the stage that came in last night and

suspected that they have an eye on this

mail, so it will stand you in hand to be a little

careful this evening.

He said the agent had described one of

them as a short, thick set fellow, about 40

years of age with long hair, and a thick

heavy clump of beard under his chin but

none on the side of his face. I did not

know anything of the other. I told him I

guessed there wasn't much danger.

Oh, no, not if you've got passengers all

the way through, but I only told you this

so that you might look out for your mail,

and also look out sharp when you change

horses.

I answered that I would do so, and

then took the bag under my arm and left

the office. I stowed the mail away under

my seat a little more carefully than usual

placing my feet against it, but beyond

that I did not feel any concern. It was

past one when we started, and I had four

passengers, two of whom rode only to

the first stopping place. I reached Gowan-

son's Mills at dark, when we stopped for

supper, and where my other two passen-

gers concluded to stop for the night.

About six o'clock in the evening I left

Gowan's Mills alone, having two horses

and a pump.

I had seventeen miles to go and a hard

seventeen miles to go, and the night

was quite clear, but the air was sharp and

cold, the loose snow lying in every di-

rection, while the drifts were deep and

loosely packed. It was slow, tedious

work, and my horses soon became leg-

weary and restive. At the distance of six

miles I came to a little settlement called

Ball's Corners, where I took fresh horses

I'd been two hours going that distance.

As I was going to start a man came out

and asked if I was going through to Lit-

tleton. I told him I should go through

if the thing could possibly be done. He

said he was anxious to go, and as he had

no baggage I told him to jump in, and

make himself as comfortable as possible.

I was gathering up my lines when the

hustler came up and asked me if I knew

one of my horses had cut himself badly.

I jumped out and found that one of the

animals had a deep corks on the off

foot, I gave a quick direction as I thought

necessary, and was about to turn away

when the hustler remarked that he

thought I came alone. I told him that I

did.

## STAGE DRIVER'S STORY.

I worked all alone, and was all of a quar-

ter of an hour getting my team through

the drift.

When I got into the sleigh again I be-

gan to feel for the mail bag with my feet.

I found it where I had left it, but when I

attempted to withdraw my foot I discover-

ed it had become fast in something. I

thought it was the buffalo, and tried to

kick it clear; but the more I kicked the

more closely it held. I reached down my

hand, and after feeling about a few mo-

ments, I found that my foot was in the

mail bag. I felt again, and found my

hands among the packages and papers. I

ran my fingers over the edge of the

opening, and became assured that the

mail leather had been cut with a knife.

Here was a discovery. I began to wish

I had taken a little more forethought be-

fore leaving Danbury; but as I knew such

wishes was only a waste of time, I quick-

ly gave it up, and began to consider

what I should do under the circumstan-

ces. I wasn't long in making up my

mind upon a few essential points. First,

the man behind me was a villain; second-

ly he had cut open the mail bag and robbed

it of some valuable matter—he must have

known the money letters by their size and

shape; third, he meant to leave the stage

on the first opportunity and fourthly, he

was prepared to shoot me if I attempted

to arrest or detain him.

I resolved these things in my mind and

pretty soon thought of a course to pursue.

I knew that to get my hands safely upon

the rascal I must take him wholly un-

warned, and this I could not do while he

was behind me, for his eyes were upon

me all the time, and I must resort to strat-

agem. Only a little distance ahead was a